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MEETING**

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Chairman: Mr. Omar Abdel Hamid ADEEL (Sudan).

AGENDA ITEM 26

Question of convening a conference for the purpose of signing a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons: report of the Secretary-General (A/5174 and Add.1) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. M. L. JOHNSON (Liberia) said that if disarmament was currently causing world-wide concern, it would be logical to remove the underlying cause of that concern—the nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons which might result in the total destruction of man and his cultural heritage. All Governments should seriously consider the dangers which would face the human race if the convention under discussion was not unanimously adopted.

2. The report of the Secretary-General (A/5174 and Add.1) indicated that only sixty Governments had replied to the inquiry on the question of convening a conference for the purpose of signing a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons; that was not sufficient to reflect a majority view of the United Nations. Moreover, a number of new nations had become independent since the sixteenth session of the General Assembly, and they too should be consulted. Because of the gravity and importance of the question and in view of the resumption of the Geneva disarmament negotiations, which would take some time in any case, it would be in the interest of all mankind to request the Secretary-General to continue consultations with Governments of Member States and to report his findings to the General Assembly at its eighteenth session.

3. Mr. MOROZOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union had clearly explained its position in its reply of 10 March 1962 to the Secretary-General's inquiry (A/5174 and Add.1). The Soviet Union for years had been urging other States to take a solemn pledge to refrain from using nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. For that reason it attached great importance to the declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its sixteenth

session on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons (resolution 1653 (XVI)) and particularly to the proposal to convene a conference for signing a convention to that end. The recent events in the Caribbean area had only strengthened the Soviet Union in its conviction: since the world was on the brink of the abyss, the thermo-nuclear danger was clearer than ever.

4. It was to be noted that the replies of Member States as reported by the Secretary-General confirmed the positions taken at the time of the adoption of resolution 1653 (XVI); most countries favoured the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, certain Member States still opposed it. It was to be hoped, therefore, that those countries would soon realize that the policy of nuclear deterrence must logically end in the outbreak of a nuclear war, which other countries wished to avoid at all costs. By raising obstacles to the convening of a conference and, consequently, to the conclusion of a convention in the very near future, the Western Powers were preventing a relaxation of tension and the creation of conditions favourable to a solution of the problem of general and complete disarmament. The countries in question had not been able to support their case by any convincing arguments. For example, it was impossible to accept the argument that the use of nuclear weapons could serve a nation's interests and protect its security; in that connexion, the General Assembly's declaration clearly stated that a nuclear war would be directed not against an enemy or enemies alone but also against mankind in general. A number of countries had opposed the convening of a special conference on the ground that such a step would be untimely while the Eighteen-Nation Committee was still continuing its work. However, most members of that Committee had declared themselves in favour of signing a convention to ban the use of nuclear weapons; only five of its members had opposed the convening of a special conference for that purpose. Thus the majority of the members of the Eighteen-Nation Committee did not believe, any more than did the majority of the Members of the United Nations, that such a ban was possible only within the context of a solution of the problem of general and complete disarmament; as a matter of fact, the ban would be a step toward the solution of the larger problem of disarmament. As everyone knew, the Protocol prohibiting the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, opened for signature at Geneva on 17 June 1925^{1/} had prevented the use of such weapons during the Second World War. No doubt those who opposed the convening of a special conference would add that the proposed agreement could be broken, so that there was no point in concluding it. But the same argument could have been advanced against signing many other agreements which nevertheless—

^{1/} League of Nations, Treaty Series, vol. XCIV, 1929, No. 2138.

like the Geneva Protocol of 1925—had been concluded and were respected in international practice. Actually, the argument was a purely artificial one. If the question was viewed realistically, it had to be recognized that the use of nuclear weapons must be prevented by all possible methods and that the signing of a convention would contribute to that result; moreover, it would reduce international tension and facilitate the solution of the problem of general and complete disarmament.

5. Some Western Powers, while opposing the signing of a convention, professed great interest in all proposals likely to eliminate the danger of nuclear war; cases in point were the United Kingdom and Italy. It

would be useful if those countries would draw the necessary practical conclusions from their statements—in other words, if they would support the proposed convention. Most Member States would undoubtedly welcome that evidence of goodwill on the part of the Western Powers.

6. The Soviet Union, for its part, wished to free all peoples from the nuclear danger; it had submitted a draft treaty on general and complete disarmament and would continue to strive toward the prohibition of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.